for 1993-94 to improve the viability of industrial projects including iron and stee] projects.

(4) deduction of customs duty on raw materials such as refractories and ferro alloys to reduce production costs of steel.

The impact of these measures will also continue into the Ninth Five Year Plan.

(c) and (d) In a study conducted by Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants (India) Limited (MEG- ON) various measures were identified for technological upgrada tion of electric arc furnace units to the country. These include introduction of high power transformers, oxy gen assisted melting, secondary refin ing, continuous casting etc. Since ele ctric are furnace units are mostly in the private sector, the initiative for teehnologicjl upgradation has to come from the units them selves. To facilitate im port of technology, iron and steel industry has been included in the list of high priority industries. This enables iron and steel unite to freely import technology within certain specified norms.

Production cost of Steel

613. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Gov ernment propose to introduce a pack age of measures aimed at reducing the capital and production costs of steel; and

(b) if so, what are the details the reof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) The budget proposals for 1993-94 contain measures aimed at reducing the capital & production costs of industrial projects including steel plants. These include lowering of customs duty on project imports and reduction of minimum interest rate on commercial frtvances. Besides, reduction of customs duty on imported raw materials & consumables like pig iron, ferrow-alloys, refractories, graphite electrodes etc. will also reduce the production costs of steel.

Visakhapatnam Steel Plant

614. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that a circular was issued during last November by the Management of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant in regard to salaries of employees; and

(b) if so what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) The Management of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has reported that keeping in view its difficult financial position, there was apprehension about some delay in the payment of salaries of the employees for the month of November, 1992. As a pre-cautionary measure and in accordance with the provisions of payment of Wages Act, the Management bad addressed the concerned authorities. It was also brought to the notice of the recognised union of employees and also displayed on the Notice Board. The salaries for the month of November, 1992 were however disbursed on the due date.

Modernistaion of HSCO

615. PROF. SAURIN BHATTA CHARYA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:. . .

(a) whether Government have tak- en a decision regarding modernisa tion of Indian Iron and Steel Com pany Limited either by private par ties or 'by Government itself;